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Oral History Interview with Kirpal Singh: Growing SMU

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Singapore Management University

Li Ka Shing Library

Conceptualising SMU: The People and Ideas behind the SMU Story

Interviewee: Kirpal Singh

Interviewer: Patricia Meyer

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Note to Reader:

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Patricia Meyer:	I am Pat Meyer. Today is Tuesday, 8th of April, 2014. This interview is a part of the Conceptualising SMU oral history project and we are meeting in the recording studio of the Li Ka Shing Library at Singapore Management University. Today I will be speaking with Professor Kirpal Singh, who is currently Associate Professor of English Literature and Creative Thinking and the Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre at SMU. Thanks for joining us today to share your recollections on the early days of SMU and your perspective on where it stands today. I want to start by just asking you to tell us about your career before you came to SMU.
Kirpal Singh:	So I entered the University of Singapore in 1969 and practically got absorbed. And my head of department and the vice chancellor, who was then Dr Toh Chin Chye—respected member of our community, deputy prime minister and all that—he didn't see it fit for me to leave the university even though the Public Services Commission wanted me to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. So I finished the honours degree in 1973. Then they gave me a scholarship to do a master's degree, then the government gave me a Colombo Plan scholarship to do a doctorate at the University of Adelaide. So all of that took quite a few years, but from 1973 onwards, when I graduated with the honours degree, myself and another classmate called Maxwell LeBlond—quite a famous Singaporean personality—we were both immediately inducted into the teaching faculty of the university. So that in brief is my career up till about 1991. I stayed on in the English Department [at the National University of Singapore]. The university moved from the Bukit Timah campus to the new Kent Ridge campus, so everything was now wonderfully embellished and all that. We had a great time discussing the politics of space in the use of the new university. This is interesting because the old university in Bukit Timah was structured along the old colleges of England, so East, West, North, South, right? And people, when they walked, you always met each other. So the science faculty, the arts faculty, the whatever faculty there were, you met in the quadrangles, the green. But this new university, you radiated out which meant that you almost never met anyone. You just sort of went out and there were no quadrangles and all that. And, of course, because I'd been involved in student union activities and all of that, this was a very quick reminder of how the government had, in a way, managed the university students. Because we were naughty, you know, we were young. And so in the old Bukit Timah campus, we used to demonstrate, lead matches down the quadrangles, protest and all of that. The Vice Chancellor would come down from his high office and say you guys are being very naughty, I'm going to get the police on you and all that, and once or twice he did. But in the new campus in Kent Ridge, there was no place to do that. There was no galvanisation of student power and that kind of thing. But guys like me by then were already on the other side, and what I found very interesting was that the swanky new facilities were very, very good, but a little bit of the old warmth that we all enjoyed at the cosy campus in Bukit Timah was somehow eroded. Anyway, I continued until 1991 when the newly born-again Nanyang Technological University—because Mr Lee had shut down the old Nanyang University and for 10 years it remained as NTI, Nanyang Technological Institute—and in 1991, he brought it back under a new name, NTU. So the university stages were restored. So they

	wanted somebody to help them set up a literature and drama department. So they asked for me. Anyway, cut a long story short, I was sent on secondment to NTU to set up this brand-new department called Division of Literature and Drama. So I did that. And I continued doing that. And then I continued until 1999, and this is where we're coming to SMU. Early in 1999, Low Kee Yang, who had himself just been inducted into the provisional set up for SMU, saw me one day and he said, I need to talk to you. So we sat down and talked a few days later, and he interested me in SMU, and said, I think we all make a very nice team and we need somebody like you to just provide us with kind of extra perspective and looking at things and all of that. So I said, sure, I'm always ready for a new adventure. And so that's how, in July 1999, I was formally interviewed. And by then the president had been more or less appointed, President-designate Janice Bellace; and Chin Tiong, Tan Chin Tiong, was also designate provost; and Kai Cheong [Tsui Kai Chong] was designate dean. And so we had this interview in a wonderful little room called Committee Room 3, which was next to the Banyan thing, Upper Bukit Timah Road. The formal meeting took place in this thing, and then, of course, we adjourned to the *sarabat* stall which was next door to have coffee and tea and just talk about things. And that was more or less when I sort of became a part of the SMU founding team.
Patricia Meyer:	When you took up this role with SMU you certainly saw opportunities. Did you see any risks when you started?
Kirpal Singh:	The only risk as Kee Yang [Low Kee Yang] told me was if the government changed its mind and shut down the university a year after it was formulated or whatever. But he said that the Singapore government is known throughout the world for one thing—that once it's made up its mind to do something, it's decisive, it's resolved, and usually it doesn't like to admit that it failed. So he said we'll at least have a ten-year run, and he says, since a few of us—and I saw the names and I knew Chin Tiong [Tan Chin Tiong] from the old university and I knew Kee Yang, most of these people, Pang Yang Hoong and Michael Gan, they were colleagues in the old university—and so I said, well, if you guys think it's ok, who am I, I'll join you guys. We're all together in this. So that was it. So, I saw lots of opportunities because they knew about me, and they knew my positions about certain university policies and all that, and they said, SMU is going to do away with everything that you didn't like in NUS [National University of Singapore] or in NTU. It's going to be a brand new university; it's going to be totally autonomous. We're going to be powerful, we will have the say; we will forge a new tertiary landscape. So I saw that, wow, at last my day has come, that kind of thing.
Patricia Meyer:	Can you just tell us how you were involved in recruiting and the admissions process?
Kirpal Singh:	So the biggest challenge was we could do one of two things. One is we would carry on to the system that we were so used to, by academic grades. And we thought that for a new university to get the best would be a bit difficult because everybody is going to head towards NUS and head towards NTU.

	The alternative was to try to formulate a different kind of admission policy. So we thought that because the government's mandate was that we were supposed to turn out graduates for the future, for the new millennium actually, and the IAAP—the International Academic Advisory Panel, that was responsible for actually recommending to the government, in 1997, that there should be a new university—their recommendation was very clear. It was pretty explicit that the two universities then, NUS and NTU, were essentially training people for the workforce, which was for yesterday and today. They were not very big on training graduates for tomorrow. So our mandate was to create a new kind of graduate. From day one, our graduate had to be visibly different, absolutely different from NUS and NTU. So everything that we did had to reflect that—the way we formulated ourselves, the way we appointed colleagues, the way we structured ourselves, and so this also then permeated into admissions. So we came up with the idea that every single person we take in will have to be interviewed by a minimum of two professors, could be three sometimes, though we thought that three professors sitting and interviewing one poor candidate could be a bit intimidating. And each interview would be half an hour. Theoretically, it was 15 minutes on our side, the profs asking the candidate questions and these things, and the next 15 minutes actually was on the candidate's side. And quite often, we had very good, positive vibes about the person who actually tries to exhaust the 15 minutes on the other side, because class participation was of the essence in the new formulation of assessment. We decided that examinations were pathetic; especially examinations that put 1,000 people in the room and said just do this. That's old-fashioned, outmoded thinking. It still persists, I'm afraid, but what can I say? But our real thrust was professors are going to decide how these students are going to be assessed, but a couple of thing to be put in place, such as class participation was going to be essential. And we were allowed to go up to 40 percent for class participation, with a minimum, *minimum* of 25 percent. I think this has been modified over time. We can talk about that a bit later. We also thought that going forward, the individual—no matter how super intelligent or genius he or she is—will learn and must learn, if he's going to be successful, to work in teams. So the other thing we became big on was group projects. So we tried to see how we are going to make this work. And so when we interviewed potential students, we had the academic results there—we had in those days, they sat for the SAT, there were of course cut-off points—when we interviewed somebody, we put that aside. So that 30-minute interview became critical to a person being admitted or not. And we offered people admissions on the spot, which I think was very, very good, and I have actually written to Cristina [Cristina Elaurza] now to say that maybe we should bring that back. If some professors were very young and very junior, not so used, may not be happy or comfortable doing that, then at least that privilege should be given to a few of us so that we can compete with others who are now using this tactic which we used in 2000 to get students in. I mean NUS is doing it. Yale-NUS is doing it, those kinds of things. So, in order to compete with them effectively today, we need to bring something like that back and not make people wait a week or two weeks. That's too long for the new candidate who's being offered places from Cambridge to Princeton to NUS. SMU mustn't say, sorry, we don't care

	who is accepting you, as far as we are concerned, you wait. That does not sit well with parents and candidates. We were very fond of candidates who could speak well. We thought that in the new world of the new millennium, communication is going to be very powerful. You can have the best credentials in the world academically, but if you couldn't communicate in ways that a good conversation carried itself, for example, you're not going to go very far in the new employment scene. And I think we have been vindicated because our first three, four cohorts were so good in communication that employers loved them, they snapped them up straight away.
Patricia Meyer:	When you first started with SMU, what were your immediate priorities?
Kirpal Singh:	I was brought in basically to do three things—one was to helm a creative thinking program, which was sensationally new. And because it was going to be mandatory for every single student—and that was the first time in the world, in the entire universe, throughout history, that every single student of this new university was going to be subjected to creative thinking, and critical thinking, to balance out. My second task was to helm the communication part of their core curriculum. That meant drawing up interesting courses which would both equip the students in a more than just proficient standard in English, as well as go beyond that by being a little bit more colourful, witty, both in writing and talking. And in those days, because we thought that communication is going to be very important, what I put in place was to train our students to be able to give interviews to television, radio—what were the differences when a newspaper reporter came to you, how to look at the camera straight and talk, and how do you then do a radio interview, those kind of things. So we saw that as very essential. We saw that interviewing over the media was a new way that people might even be recruiting you. So very often they're either going to see you face-to-face but that may came later, the first thing might be a phone call. The potential boss just wants to have a chat, and if you are not very good in telephone manners, those kind of things …. So that was my second area, broadly speaking. And my last area was to look after this thing called 'general electives', which was all and sundry, anything that did not fit in the first school of business and their component parts came to Kirpal. And I did those three things, I think, with some degree of success. But as the university grew a bit larger, then these three portfolios became harder and harder to manage all three at one time.
Patricia Meyer:	I want to touch on that more later on. I want to ask you just to look at the creative thinking program. How did you get started, because you'd been specialising in post-colonial literature and then you're in charge of this creative thinking program? How did that get going? What was your inspiration?
Kirpal Singh:	Well, my brief was very simple. My brief was to try and construct a new syllabus; which would bring out the creative self in all our students. As far as the details were concerned, the dean said, I've got no time for all the details, I am trusting you to do it

	and you just go do it. But I think that was a very important lesson for all of us at the start because trust was a very important factor, which meant that I could go and ask anyone I like. So because of that empowerment, I was able to put together a team of adjuncts. I was the only person full-time from here that was doing creative thinking, initially, but I had this wonderful eight, nine people come to help me. And because they were diverse, they came from very different fields—a visual artist; a theater person; an architect; Johnny Lau, the guy who created the Kiasu comics and all that; people like him came. So our students learnt a lot of things like an architect can also be a creator of comic books, he can also write poems, and all of these became very exciting platforms for them. They'd never had anything like this in their lives. And when the newspapers asked me, "So how do you propose to teach this creative thinking? What's the pedagogy going to be?" I said, the pedagogy will depend on each person who is going to come in. But, I said, I can tell you one thing that *all* of them are going to go through. And they said, "What?" I said, it's going to be the undoing of everything they have learnt in the last 12 years. Because the last 12 years they've learnt things by rote, they've learnt things by putting memory work. But now when they come in here, all this, out there, they're going to start anew, they're going to start afresh, they're going to start like little babies who're going to learn how to crawl, sit up and then slowly run. And that's why I took charge of the creative thinking program.
Patricia Meyer:	Can you give us some examples of student projects?
Kirpal Singh:	I had a class that went from 12 midnight to six in the morning to creatively try and see whether that would be okay. Students loved it. Their parents were not very happy about it, but they loved it. I had a class conducted in Changi Hotel, where one student came up to me and she said, Prof, my father really thinks this is rubbish. He thinks you're up to no good. And he's going to come round at some point to check on me. So I said, "Wonderful!" So we started the class at 9 pm, and it was residential to the next day. And true enough, Mr Ong turned up at around 11.30, and I was waiting for him. And he came and he sort of looked around and said, "Excuse me." I said, "Sir, are you Mr Ong?" He said "Yes." I said, "I am Kirpal Singh." "Oh," he said, "You're the prof?" I said, "Yes." So I said, would you like to go in? They're doing a little bit of an exercise in the room. There are about nine of them in this room, ten of them in the other room. And this is going to go right through until about four in the morning, then I am going to let them sleep. And I said, this is to test resilience, to try a new way of educational pedagogy because most of these kids don't wake up till about ten, eleven. They sleep at about three, four. At this point, nine, ten in the evening, they are at their best, they're absorbing and all that. So he said no, no, no, that's fine. I just wanted to make sure that she was okay. So I said, fine. And he went off. So I told Pat, the student, I said, your dad came and left. But I think it was….I think firstly, certainly in 2000 to about 2003, a lot of parents who, in a way allowed or were okay with their children coming to SMU, were also a

	different kind of, set of parents. I mean their thinking was to say, let's go with the new, let's see what the new is about. And many of them were graduates of the old universities and they probably didn't look back with great fondness on their education, they wanted to experiment. So they were risk-takers as well. I think we have to take them into consideration. So 50 percent of the time, I knew I was going to win anyway because who would send the person to a new school? The other 50 percent was a matter of communication, persuasion, a bit of fun, we had a lot of fun. We found that there is no incompatibility between real learning and having fun. So the old seriousness, which my professor had told me, no laughter and all that, was now out of the window. And the new idea was to have fun, to crack a few jokes, to get things going because in that way adrenaline began to flow. And young people are very creative if only you give them… I always began by saying—my students, I used to challenge them—I said, you've got all these facilities. Some of them said, oh, you want us to be creative in this room? These are all blank things. So I said, "Do something!" And they said, oh, what do we do? And I said, I don't know. I said, if you go back to the time when you were five or six years old, and you are two little kids in this room, you come up with games, you make imaginary games, you construct things—suddenly you're daddy, suddenly she's grandma, and all kind of things will happen. What happened to that creativity? That's when being provoked like that and challenged like that… So, of course, we had classrooms smeared with all kinds of paint and everything. Those days the facility manager came in and said, Kirpal, these are supposed to be clean walls. I said, which is the happier classroom? This one, absolutely boring or that one, with all these creative things? I think it was a lot of trial and experiment, and I think today we have a lot of rules. This is why creative thinking has become almost formulaic. And I still love my colleagues who are teaching this creative thinking, but I think the fundamental idea of making a young person confident and proud of his or her own innate ability to bring something new in the world, that is not really the fundamental aim of today's thing, today's program, and this is why I moved out. Today's programme seems to be more like—so what do you know about creative thinking? There are textbooks and all that. But there cannot be any textbook about creative thinking. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* was so impressed by our program that they did a whole centre spread on creative thinking program and it hit the world. I think it was in 2004 or something like that. And at that point, some of the better universities in America had already begun to sit up and take cognisance of the fact that in this remote part of the world called Singapore, and in this very new small university called SMU —which is often mixed with their Southern Methodist University—there was this new experiment taking place.
Patricia Meyer:	I want to just touch on the other two areas of responsibility that you had in the beginning. How did you go about selecting—or you and the group selecting—what are the general electives going to be? What do you need for this new university?
Kirpal Singh:	So one of the understood things that we had as a team was to say that one way in which the SMU graduate will be distinctly different from the NUS and NTU would be

	we try to make him as all rounded as possible. So what I did was to get people like Patrick Loh, who does science kind of thing, and we said we're going to get you into doing the scientific thing because you run farms, you got organic things involved, so you're going to carve out a new kind of syllabus which will teach people entrepreneurship, the business strategies by which you can set things up. I got a historian from NUS, Malcolm Murfett to come and teach history. But I said the history we're going to teach here is not your usual history. I said, maybe think of four major business major icons—say you take the Sony boss; you take the big giant, Bill Gates; you take two from Asia, two from the West, bring them together as a case study because the history of these giants is also a history of the times. You know what I mean? Could this have happened when World War II was going on? What kind of giants emerged from that? Was it defence equipment, defence products that would be the biggest sellers at that time? Or were the defences already in place and they created the war just to make sure the defence weapons sold? So I said, tease your students and all that. So I picked people I knew, I picked people who were themselves very, very brilliant. Life is not always very kind to the people who are really brilliant. So some of them were frustrated where they were, and so they were very happy to grab at this new opportunity to teach a course which they themselves put in place. Because these courses didn't have to go through the university committees and all of this. What went through the university committee is the broad thing, the creation of a general elective program. And the rest was left to me, and I left it to my wonderful people who came from all over the blooming… That's how we went. We wanted to create the East-West thing so we had dances East and West, music East and West, everything East and West, and I insisted on that. Some of the modules still carry on having that same name, East and West. Some of them have changed over time. But the idea was to create a person who was sensitive, not just to East, because the idea was a global experience. The new graduate would fit *anywhere* in the world. The old graduate would fit in Singapore as a wonderful employee. But the new graduate has to be a wonderful employee, whether in Chicago or Dubai or Shanghai or Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak, wherever he or she found the opportunity. So that created the platform by which I chose my professors. I chose professors obviously quite deviously as well. I chose good ones, good rankings and highly respected individuals so the students felt like, wow, they're being taught by somebody special not the ordinary run-of-the-mill prof, that kind of thing. So it was quite an exciting time, yes.
Patricia Meyer:	One other thing that started very early was the first centre for SMU. And can you just tell us a little about how that got started?
Kirpal Singh:	I thought it would be nice to set up a centre for cross-cultural studies. And so I met with Chin Tiong and I said, I've got this idea. So he said, why don't you write it out? So I did a preamble and everything and shared it with Kai Cheong. And they were very excited, they said, wow, this is great, why don't we do it? And this was a new initiative, and this was November 1999; we were ready to go, you know.

Patricia Meyer:	And then that centre was renamed?
Kirpal Singh:	The centre for cross-cultural studies sounds a little bit pedantic, sounds a little bit academic. And what does the man in the street have to do with a centre of cross-cultural study? So I was talking with Kwon Ping [Ho Kwon Ping], and I said, KP, maybe we need a name for this centre, which is not like this, named after a person. We came up with a few names, and Wee Kim Wee, and his was one of the names. And KP, myself, Janice [Janice Bellace] and Chin Tiong, the four of us met and we talked about it. And we finally said, Mr Wee is a good example. Because basically, he came from nothing to something, his education was pretty low, and then he educated himself. Then he joined the media, and he rose from a rookie to the head of state. This was an example of a cross-cultural, inter-cultural person. You know, he looks Chinese and all that and yet he hardly spoke a word of Chinese, he was so comfortable in Malay. So he really embraced the whole idea of diversity. And so we approached him and asked to use his name and he said okay with two conditions. One is, my name shall not be used to make profits, and he said, my name will be used to educate the larger community. Because he said, you're already educating your own students, they're there and they're yours. But he said, people outside the university also need to benefit from the university's expertise, knowledge and all that. So those were the two conditions. So we agreed. And that's how the Wee Kim Wee Centre came to be.
Patricia Meyer:	Which leads right into the questions about the writers' festivals that you've attended, organised, and the American Writers Festival at SMU. Can you just tell us a little bit about why are these important?
Kirpal Singh:	So in some ways I was very blessed because my mentor and the prof who took me in hand, a wonderful man call Edwin Thamboo. Prof Thamboo and I have had a sort of love-hate, convoluted, father-son kind of relationship over all these years So when I became a student and then his colleague in the department, it was quite interesting, that kind of thing. He was chairman of the Singapore Writers' everything. So he was chairman of the writers' festival for like 15 years, and I was his understudy, deputy chairman of the writers' festival. And then he said, no, I'm going to go and do other things, you take over the chairmanship. So I became chairman of the Singapore Writers' Festival for like 12 years. So that went on, so I have always been a part of the Singapore writing scene and a lot of battles fought and won, some won, a few now winning still. When it came to the *new*, the revamp and the creation of the *new* Singapore Writers' Festival, which began with Paul Tan becoming the director. So it was interesting. Paul was my student, right? So we're all sort of inter-linked. So I was talking with Paul and I was on the initial steering committee, the first one of the new revamped one, and we were looking around for venues. So I said, use SMU. He said, SMU? I said, yes. You know, I said, SMU is central, we are right there. He said, wow, but the logistics? I said, all those can be handled. What we need to do is just think it, and then we make it happen. And that's how the first writers' festival took place on our campus, the campus green here. It was beautiful.

Patricia Meyer:	I know that the time is drawing near, but I have a couple of more points I really want to cover. When you started with the school of business, and then you're a member of school of economics and social science, and now social science, and now you're also heading this new program for the arts and culture. Can you just tell us a little bit about your journey and also what your vision was? You touched on it earlier about humanities in SMU and just where you want to see that going?
Kirpal Singh:	So, my dream has been always, and some of my fellows from the 1999 batch of appointees, they think that I'm sentimental. And they said that you should stop being sentimental, times have changed. But I tell them, I say, no, so long as I've got life in my body and some strength in my brain, I'm going to just carry on thinking of new programs. So that's how the Arts and Culture Management program came about. I scanned the universities around the world. Firstly, there was no arts management program at the undergraduate level again. And then, at the master's level, it seemed to be like a terminal degree, like the MFA [Master of Fine Arts]. And then it seemed to be always arts management. And so I was looking around and I thought because they have got these arts management programs and all that, the one thing that I found that was missing in this arts management thing was the cultural component. So I thought if we could offer a program called Arts and Culture Management at the undergraduate as a degree program, it'd be really super. So I shared that vision with Arnoud, he said, good. He appointed me to chair a task force and the task force, I put the members together, so we went around the world looking and setting up collaboration and all that. But somebody had cold feet, just when we're about to push forward. But now I'm glad to say this idea of the degree program for Arts And Culture Management is back on the board again. Because they have now realised that maybe we should have actually begun that way and just got it through. Just as we were bold enough to get new programs going in. So that has been a very, very interesting journey. I think the arts and culture management is something that most people think still should be at the graduate level. But I've got probably one of the best persons in the whole world dealing with this. It was the guy in charge of the Chicago Art Institute [School of the Art Institute of Chicago]. And today he's an older man, the chancellor of the Chicago Art institute, Anthony Jones, very distinguished scholar-professor. And he was advisor to the Singapore's ministry many years ago when NAFA was being formed, LASALLE was being formed, SOTA was being formed. So he's the guru. So I thought I'd better get the guru onside. And he was so excited, in fact he has just written a letter of disappointment to say, what's happening? This is like four years now, things should move, that kind of thing. So he's getting old, too, he's 74. So he wants to see this really come in.
Patricia Meyer:	I know we are at the time, so I just want to sum up with one simple question: Any advice for our SMU students and graduates?

Kirpal Singh:	Okay. So, yes, I can give at least a few, related pieces. What I've observed in many of the current students is that many of them are now into 'the show' rather than 'the substance'. And this is also in the forms in which they do their final group presentations, it's all gadgets and gizmos. I tell them, I said, things can actually go very wrong with that. Because one of your gizmos doesn't work, you've got a glitch, you're finished, right? But I said, more than that, after the show, what? You know, I said, the important thing is if you share with somebody a three-minute video clip and the guy said, "Wah, this is good!" but he doesn't take it out to the coffee shop, to the restaurant, to his wife, to his daughter and say, "My God, today I saw this clip…," he doesn't talk about it, you're finished. I said, the new world you have to have both form and substance. But, I said, probably the way I see it, the world has had a lot of show in recent times but it's now going to go back a little bit to the substance, so make sure you read a lot. Read widely. And think about what you read. That's number one. Number two, don't be afraid, you know what I mean? God, or whoever you believe is your creator, whether its nature, whether you're just self-born, you have been given a very special and precious gift called 'life', and you have to make beauty out of that life. Try to minimise the ugliness, try to increase the beauty and the joy. And I said, because you're young, you're youthful, you have a whole life ahead of you with *everything* given. I said, many times I think that if I was born today, how different it would be, with all the future…. SMU is such a beautiful place because you get to meet all these CEOs, you've get to meet wonderful people from all around the world. You get to travel, your exchange, your internship and all that. Don't waste any precious moment. It's so easy to just drift, and once you get caught by the form then you get gripped by the idea of distraction and all that, then you lose your focus. And even though you get your degree, the world out there is going to test you in very, very different ways. So I give them the example of this Goldman Sachs guy. So one of the senior VPs of Goldman Sachs flew in from New York to Singapore and was having a round of meetings. This was about four years ago. He called me up for a chat over breakfast, and he said, you know, we looked to your university for creating these wonderful graduates. But, he said, quite frankly, I am a bit disappointed. So, I said, what happened? He said they had one guy from SMU who had reached the kind of VP level and then was in line to be promoted. Now apparently in Goldman Sachs, when you go from VP to senior VP, you become part of the global team, then you're no longer responsible for any place or country, you're at the top. And with it comes like a minimum of 15 million bonus every year for the top 50 of them. So it's big money, right? He said, we interviewed this SMU graduate who had been nine years with Goldman Sachs, our first cohort, very good, very able, but one area for some reason seems to be a little bit missing. And he said he couldn't create a conversation that centred on things that were beyond the financial world. So he said, we asked him what was the last play he saw? And he said the guy said, the last play was probably when I was first year of university, like years ago. And they said, oh, that's okay. So do you travel? Oh yeah, I travel. Where? Oh, New York, Chicago, London and all that. So he said, well, in London, there's the Victoria Museum, Albert and Victoria Museum, the VNA, what part of VNA do you like? And he said, actually, I haven't

	been in there. But he said, by the time we asked two, three more questions like this, we saw nothing but ignorance. So he said, Kirpal, at that level, when we meet, we don't talk about this data and all that. That is all done. We talk about these other things because we talk about people who have got like 500 million dollars to invest. You want to manage that portfolio? You've got to build up a client relationship. That guy wants a person who knows about megatrends, knows about culture and arts. Then he told me, he said, the Malaysian guy, they also interviewed the Malaysian candidate, he also didn't get the job. But, he said, the Malaysian guy at least had the capacity to hijack the conversation. Because he said when we asked him about the London Symphony, he said, I haven't had much experience of the London Symphony, I've heard a couple of things over the radio, or maybe my wife has a record somewhere. But he said, I can tell you something about the Malaysian symphony. But he said, your Singapore guy was not even able to do that. We gave him opportunities, nothing happened. So he said, maybe your university might want try to acculturate your students with this larger, bigger picture. But, of course, it is a challenge.
Patricia Meyer:	Thank you so very much for today.

Definition

Acronym

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
IAP	International Advisory Panel
MFA	Master of Fine Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education

NIE	National Institute of Education
NTI	Nanyang Technological Institute
NTU	Nanyang Technological University
NU	Nanyang University
NUS	National University of Singapore
PC	Politically correct
OCBC	Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
SAT	Standardised college admissions test
SOSS	School of Social Sciences
UOB	United Overseas Bank Limited
US	United States
VNA	Victoria and Albert Museum
VP	Vice president